

Good morning members of the Government Administration and Election Committee, thank you for allowing me testify before you this morning.

My name is Alejandro Pedreira. I am a Graduate student at the University of Connecticut School of Social Work majoring in policy practice and interning at the Nancy A. Humphreys Institute for Political Social Work.

I am here today in opposition of **Raised Bill # 5022: An Act Concerning the Citizens' Election Program**. Please oppose the changes presented in this bill which will decrease the amount of grant money given to candidates using the Citizens' Election Program. The Citizens' Election Program is making a dramatic difference in opening up the election process and changing the way government operates in Connecticut.

In the 2009 Connecticut General Assembly, 71% of State Representatives and 89% of State Senators have been elected after participating in the Citizens' Election Program. In both House and Senate races, many successful candidates took advantage of the CEP.

In 2008 102 women ran for General Assembly seats – the largest number of female candidates in ten years. 93% of them ran under the Citizens' Election Program. And we are looking forward to a full roll-out of the new program in the 2010 election cycle.

The new system has already demonstrated that it is possible for people of more modest means to run when the influence of special interest money shrinks. For years, environmentalists in Connecticut have tried to expand the bottle bill recycling program to include requiring five cent deposits on plastic water bottle bottles, but the powerful beverage industry and their paid lobbyists were able to stop every effort at reform because they gave thousands of dollars in campaign contributions to legislators in the General Assembly. Early in the legislative session this year, the General Assembly – with nearly 80% if it's members having participated in the Citizens' Election Program – votes to expand the bottle bill for the first time since 1978. The General Assembly voted to reclaim unclaimed bottle deposits from the beverage industry and placed those funds in the General Fund.

As a Connecticut citizen with aspirations of running for elected office in the future, the Citizen's Election Program will be beneficial to me by providing an equal method of fundraising for all parties. The program will not only benefit me but will also benefit other citizens who also want to be elected officials and represent people's needs.

This is a system that is worth preserving and expanding. This is a system that is worth protecting. Please oppose the changes proposed to Raised Bill # 5022 and give an equal opportunity to candidates under the Citizens' Election Program.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions.